

1. (currently amended) A method operative in a work environment wherein entities to be scheduled each access a computer network using a client computer, comprising:

during a given time period, enabling each of a set of entities, irrespective of their seniority or ranking in the work environment, to use the client computer to identify a given schedule pattern set and to identify a set of one or more bids with respect to one or more schedules that are associated with that given schedule pattern set;

at the close of the given time period, selecting using one or more processing devices to select a given set of the entities for scheduling with respect to the given schedule pattern set; and

assigning using one or more processing devices to assign the given set of the entities to one or more of the candidate schedules that are associated with the given schedule pattern set;

~~wherein one or more of the steps are performed at least in part using one or more processing devices.~~

2. (original) The method as described in claim 1 further including the step of: enabling the given entity to identify a set of sorting preferences associated with the given schedule pattern set.

3. (original) The method as described in claim 2 further including the step of enabling an entity to identify a new given schedule pattern set and an associated set of sorting preferences during the given time period.

4. (original) The method as described in claim 1 further including the step of enabling an entity to select a different schedule pattern set, and to identify a set of one or more bids associated with the different schedule pattern set during the given time period.

5. (original) The method as described in claim 1 wherein the entity ranks the set of one or more bids associated with the given schedule pattern set.

6. (original) The method as described in claim 1 further including the step of automatically ranking the set of one or more bids associated with the given schedule pattern set.

7. (original) The method as described in claim 1 further including the step of assigning a schedule to at least one entity that did not provide a bid for any candidate schedules that are associated with the given schedule pattern set.

8. (original) The method as described in claim 1 further including the step of deselecting a given set of the entities for scheduling with respect to the given schedule pattern set.

9. (currently amended) Apparatus, for use in a work environment wherein entities to be scheduled each access a computer network using a client computer, comprising:

a processor;

code executable by the processor during a given time period to enable each of a set of entities, irrespective of their seniority or ranking in the work environment, to use the client computer to identify a given schedule pattern set and to identify a set of one or more bids with respect to one or more schedules that are associated with that given schedule pattern set; and

code executable by the processor at the close of the given time period and responsive to selection of a given set of the entities for scheduling with respect to the given schedule pattern set for assigning the given set of the entities to one or more of the candidate schedules that are associated with the given schedule pattern set.